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September 2, 1976

Dear Senator Clark:

Thank you for your letter of August 17 regarding the detention in Argentina of Father James Weeks.

Father Weeks and five seminarians, four Argentines and one Chilean, were arrested on August 3 in Cordoba, Argentina, purportedly for subversion. Our Embassy in Buenos Aires learned of the arrest on August 4. The Embassy tried immediately to confirm that Father Weeks was being held and establish consular access to him. Argentine authorities confirmed the arrest but refused to grant consular access on the grounds that Weeks was being held incommunicado. The Embassy orally protested the Argentine position on August 6, saying it was a violation of the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations which provides for consular access. The Embassy protested in writing on August 9 and the Department reiterated that protest to the Argentine Ambassador on August 12.

Consular access was finally granted on August 16th. An Embassy consular officer visited Father Weeks on the 17th and he was released that same day. Father Weeks arrived in the United States on August 19. He said that he was in good health.

Father Weeks' detention generated considerable congressional, press and public interest in the United States. The Argentine Embassy in Washington was well aware of this interest which must have contributed to Weeks' release.

The other seminarians arrested with Father Weeks are apparently still under detention. The Catholic Church in Argentina is trying to secure their release.

I hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely yours,

CW

Robert J. McCloskey
Assistant Secretary for
Congressional Relations

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The Honorable
Dick Clark

United States Senate.

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